

# The Open Data Race among Czech Ministries

Submitted on 31 Mar 2015 by Michal Kuban

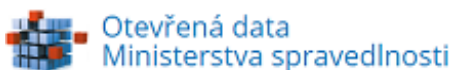
At the beginning of this year the race to publish Open Data among Czech ministries got underway.

Since January, when the Ministry of Finance systematically published its first open datasets, other Czech ministries have picked up the gauntlet. A few weeks ago (mid March) the Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic announced that it had launched its own [Open Data Portal](#) and was willing to carry on the publication process of open data in the near future.



According to the [recently appointed](#) Minister of Justice Robert Pelikán, it has been his goal to make the Ministry more transparent and show its entire financial activities. However, the open data portal only contains invoices from 2009 to 2014, and contracts from 2009 to 2015. That is all that has been published so far. The personal data such as salaries, remunerations and budgets from all ministerial resorts will eventually be published as well. But basically, the data portal only shows groups of datasets that are about to be published. It seems promising but it is not obligatory.

The entire portal, which runs on the Drupal platform and uses modules of DKAN, is a mimic of the data portal of the Ministry of Finance. It only differs from the Ministry of Finance portal by using different background picture and by its different content of datasets. However, this Ministry has to keep up with updates and add more new datasets from different resorts. So far, there seems to have been lot of ‘fussing’ around, predominantly aiming for media attention than rather focusing on better quality and broad scale of new datasets.



Like it or not, the Ministry of Finance has the status of being the first Czech Ministry to publish its open data, and has become the leading ministry to be able to pass on lessons-learned to the Ministry of Justice. What is really interesting is what is going behind the scenes. The Minister of Finance is represented by its minister Ondřej Babiš - billionaire and leader of political movement ANO. The ANO movement is a not traditional party since it stands on its leader and entrepreneur Andrej Babiš who, within three years, almost won parliamentary election in 2013 and local election in 2014. However, their electorate is made of young people, opportunists who have chosen popular topics and use topic of transparency and openness to attract disappointed traditional voters. This resulted in the party gaining many votes in the national and local election. The ANO movement now holds 6 of the 14 ministries, including the Ministries of Justice, Finance, Defence and Armed Forces, Environment, Regional Development and Transport.

The Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Finance have now launched their own open data portals to help inform others of their mistakes. Generally speaking, it is efficient to learn from the mistakes and share experiences with other ministries that are willing to publish open data. However, we cannot be sure that these ministries established an on-going open data policy for all its resorts.

To sum up, after years of struggling, since January 2015 the Czech Republic now has two ministries with their own open data portals. Not a bad start, but I am afraid that now comes the real hard work of securing quality of data, reuse of data, and adding more valuable datasets. I believe that all of these processes which are currently in progress will develop into a national open data policy for every state institution, leading to a final launch of the Czech National Open Data Catalogue. Yes, the

Czech Republic still does not have its own National Open Data Catalogue and thus each ministry (such as the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Finance) as well as other institutions use their own tools (CKAN or DKAN). I am a little afraid that the opening of these ministry open data portals, lead by the ANO movement, is just one of the activities related to their pretend 'calls for transparency' - helping them to collect positive points from media, rather than establishing a long-term open data policy in the Czech Republic. I hope that I will be proved wrong by the end of this year.